

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-1), Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness, presided over the markup today of the Readiness Subcommittee's portion of H.R. 1960, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2014, which passed with unanimous support from the subcommittee members.

"There is no greater challenge, and certainly no greater obligation, than to ensure our forces have the training and equipment they need to accomplish their missions," Chairman Wittman said during his opening statement. "This mark attempts to address the 'readiness shortfalls' exacerbated by misplaced priorities and choices driven by what Secretary Hagel described during the Department's budget roll-out as a necessary component of a 'comprehensive deficit reduction plan.' While I'm concerned about the budget and fiscal issues our nation faces, I'm also very worried about our troops and whether they are sufficiently trained and ready. While the mark represents a good first step toward addressing our readiness challenges, much work remains to be done and the mark won't completely fix what many have labeled a readiness crisis."

Chairman Wittman stressed critical provisions in the mark, including a prohibition of funding to propose, plan for or execute a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round.

"We're prohibiting the Department from proposing, planning or initiating another round of BRAC because it simply doesn't make sense at this time – from any perspective – fiscal or otherwise. As we're simultaneously fighting a war and ramping down operations in Afghanistan – something we've never done before that involves one of the most complicated logistics operations our nation has ever undertaken -- we're also focused on the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Strategic Choices and Management Review, and many other studies focused on the size and structure of our military post-2014.

"We should focus on making informed decisions after we've had a chance to review the results and recommendations of the various reviews, and after we've held open hearings to fully evaluate and consider them. This is our job as members of the Armed Services Committee. It's premature to expend dollars we don't have - to fix a problem we're not sure exists. Strategy, not budgets, should drive national security decisions, and I won't support a reduction in our infrastructure until I'm confident our nation's readiness, and our military, won't suffer."

Other highlights in the mark include:

-Increased oversight of LCS and F-35 programs and requirements for DoD to issue a lifecycle sustainment plan for both platforms;

-Ensuring appropriate stationing of missile defense capacity in Asia by requiring DoD to analyze and report on missile defense capabilities in Guam;

-Ensuring the Department has continued access to military training ranges;

-Providing pay and benefit authorities for federal civilians deployed overseas who represent an important element of national force readiness; and

-Supporting the retention of seven cruisers and two amphibious ships currently proposed for early retirement – another short sighted solution with long-term readiness consequences.

The Readiness portion of the NDAA, the largest of all of the subcommittees, now moves to the full House Armed Services Committee for consideration on June 5, 2013.

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